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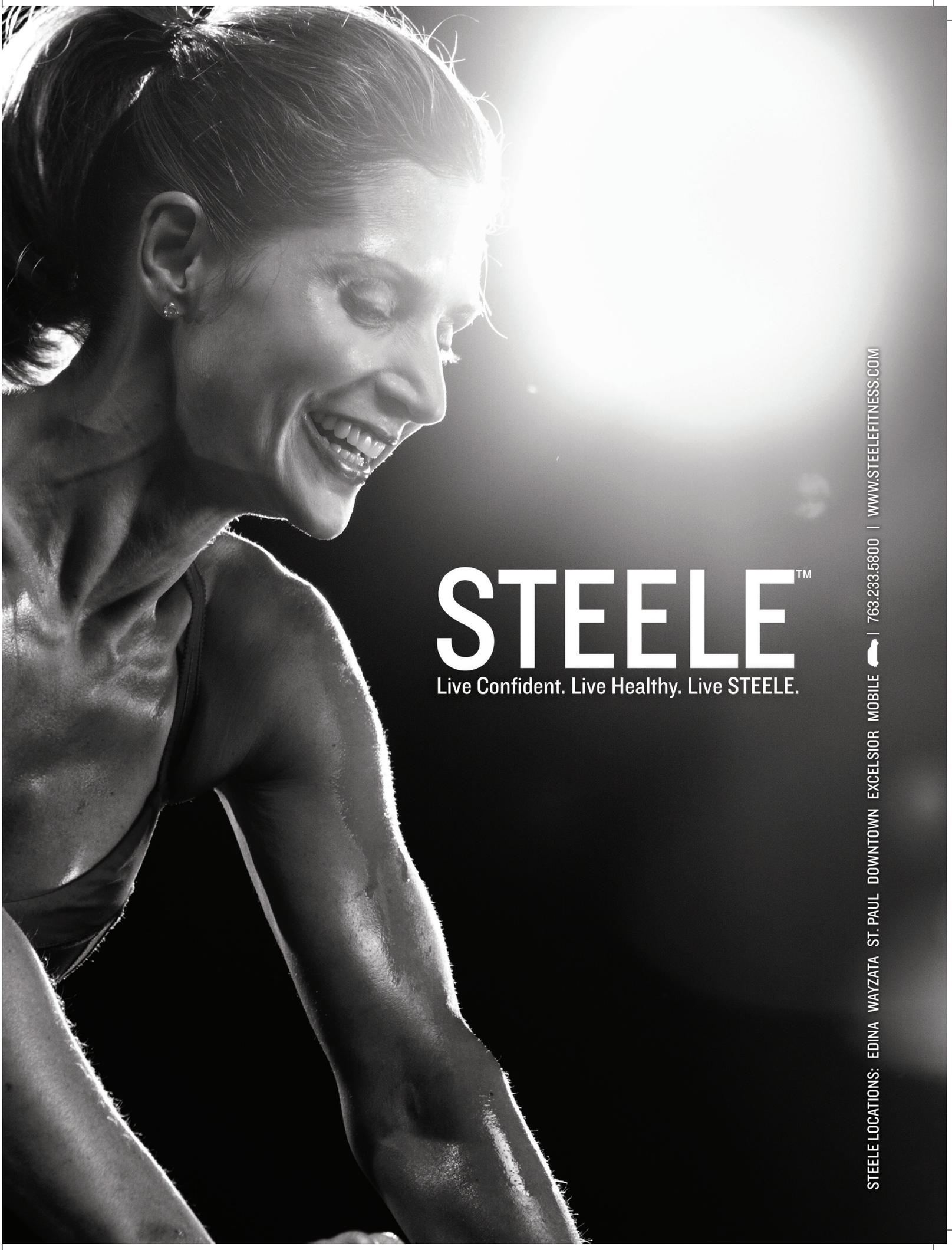
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NOVEMBER 29-DECEMBER 12, 2012 | ISSUE 457

CONTENTS

OUR LAVENDER
8 From the Editor
10 A Word in Edgewise
12 Lavender Lens: MADONNA in Concert
14 Lavender Lens: Love Wins & Roxxy Hall

OUR SCENE
16 FOC Map
20 Bar Showcase
22 Arts Spotlight
26 Arts Review: We Love You, Birdie
28 Arts Interview: Ben Riggs of TCGMC
30 Slice: The Lynn on Bryant
36 Travel: Cedar Rapids

OUR LIVES
38 Senior Living: Aging with Dignity
46 Senior Living: Living with Mom

OUR AFFAIRS
51 Big Gay News
52 Books: 'Help Me Live As I Die'
55 Commentary
57 Law: In Your Court

OUR RESOURCES
59 The Network
62 Community Connection
65 Classifieds

OUR VOICES
61 Dateland
64 Ms. Behavior
64 Trolin
66 Through These Eyes



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26



30

Photo by Hubert Bonnet



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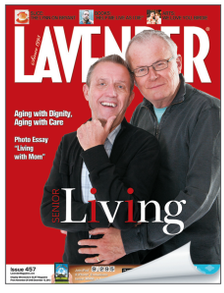
38



52

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ON THE COVER

Don Ofstedal and Jerry Lee have been together since the early '70s. Legally married in 2004 in Massachusetts, these gentlemen were featured in our spring Wedding Issue (#439) and we were delighted when they agreed to model for our Senior Living Issue. Thank you, Don & Jerry!
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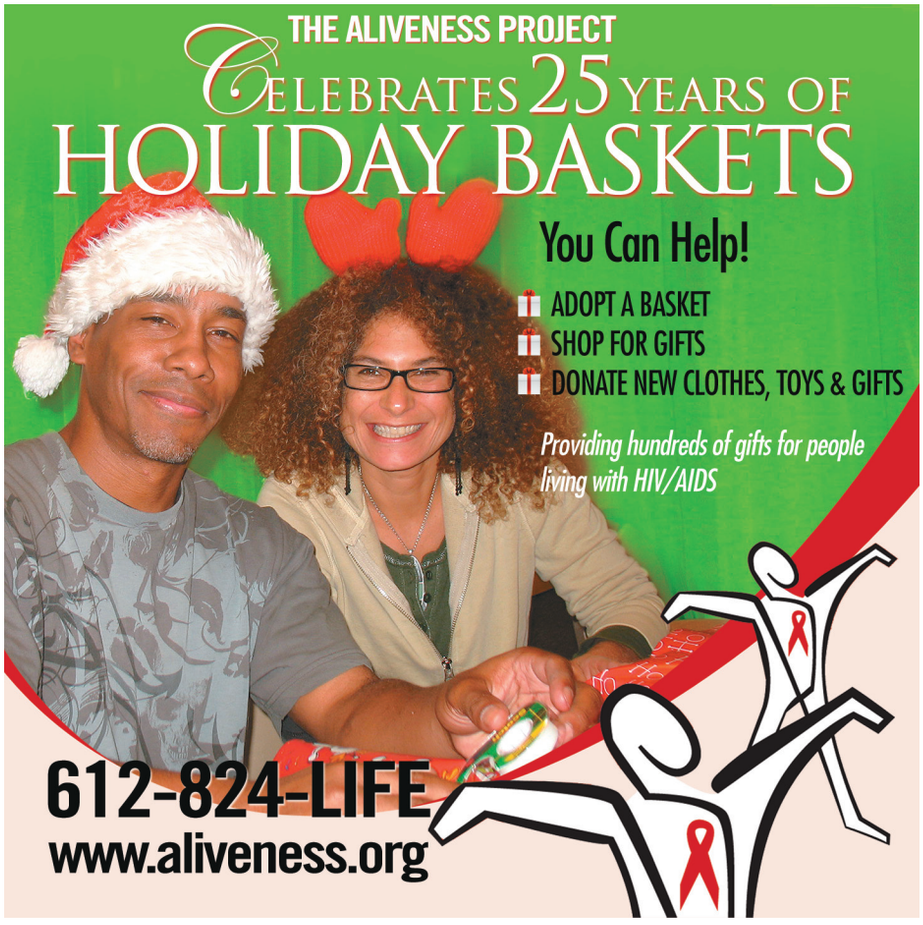


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Giving Thanks

IT'S AFTER Thanksgiving, but giving thanks has no cut-off date. A year and a half into this job as Managing Editor, I've got a few things to be thankful for…not the least of which is that I have the opportunity to do so, publicly.

I'm thankful for a working website that has been embraced by the community. A year ago, I was working with our team to revamp and update both the website and the layout of the magazine to match each other and our community's style of accessing information. It's proven to be a robust hub of activity as people use it to add events to our calendar and interact with each other in comments…and we're only going to make it better.

I'm thankful for our iPad and iPhone apps (and our Online Magazine that's viewable on all smartphones). We're closing in on 10,000 installations and people seem to be embracing this paperless method of accessing our free publication effortlessly. It's just delivered and waiting for you each time an issue of *Lavender* comes out. Join the club and get it in Newsstand.

I'm thankful that the election is over and the state voted NO.

I'm thankful that Lavender Media took home Minnesota Magazine & Publishing Association Excellence Awards. To me, the most significant of our ten awards are the ones for the Overall Excellence of the magazine, the Overall Design of the magazine, the Regular Column (Joy Summers's Slice), the website award, and the single-topic issue award for our Spring Wedding Issue. The others are important, too, but these pointed to a consistency in producing an award-winning product as well as underscored that a same-sex wedding issue can not only be done, but it can be done well.

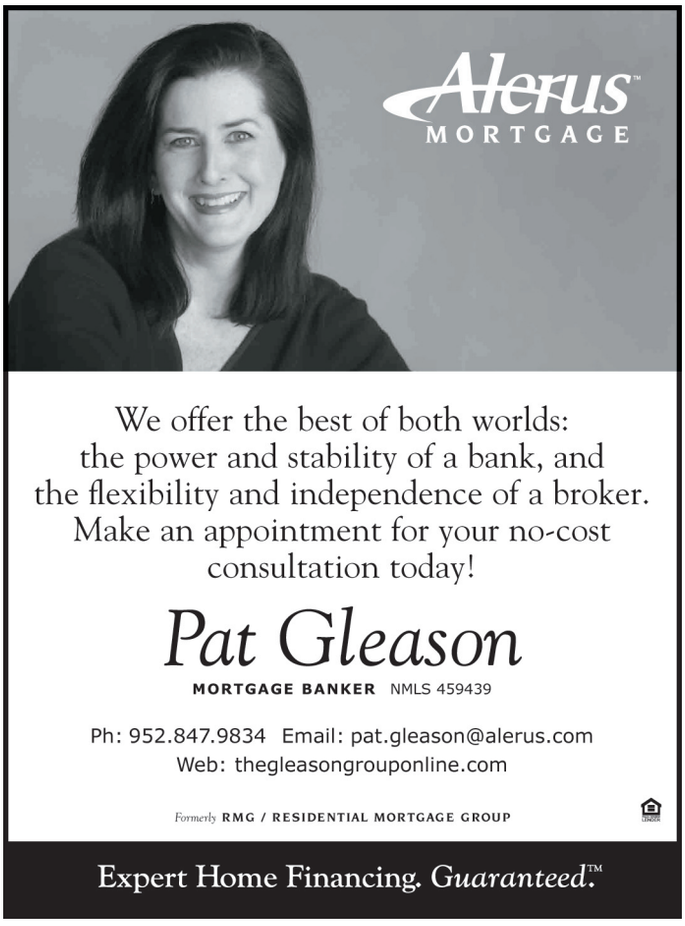
Last and most, I am thankful for the relationships I've grown with so many of you. I write for the readers. I plan the issues for the readers and the advertisers. I attend events to document you, to meet you, to tell your stories. But, as it happens, when I meet you, the line between media and public turns elastic and we embrace. I am grateful.

I wish you the best this Holiday Season.

I give thanks for you.

Andy







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There's a Long Long Trail A-Winding

THE NUMBER of gays isn't growing through some nefarious "homosexual agenda," it is simply becoming visible, just as there are more people of color coming into positions of influence and authority throughout the country. But having invisible gays and people of color "out there" and having to accept their actual presences are two different things, and the reality is frightening to many. The price of success includes both victory and danger.

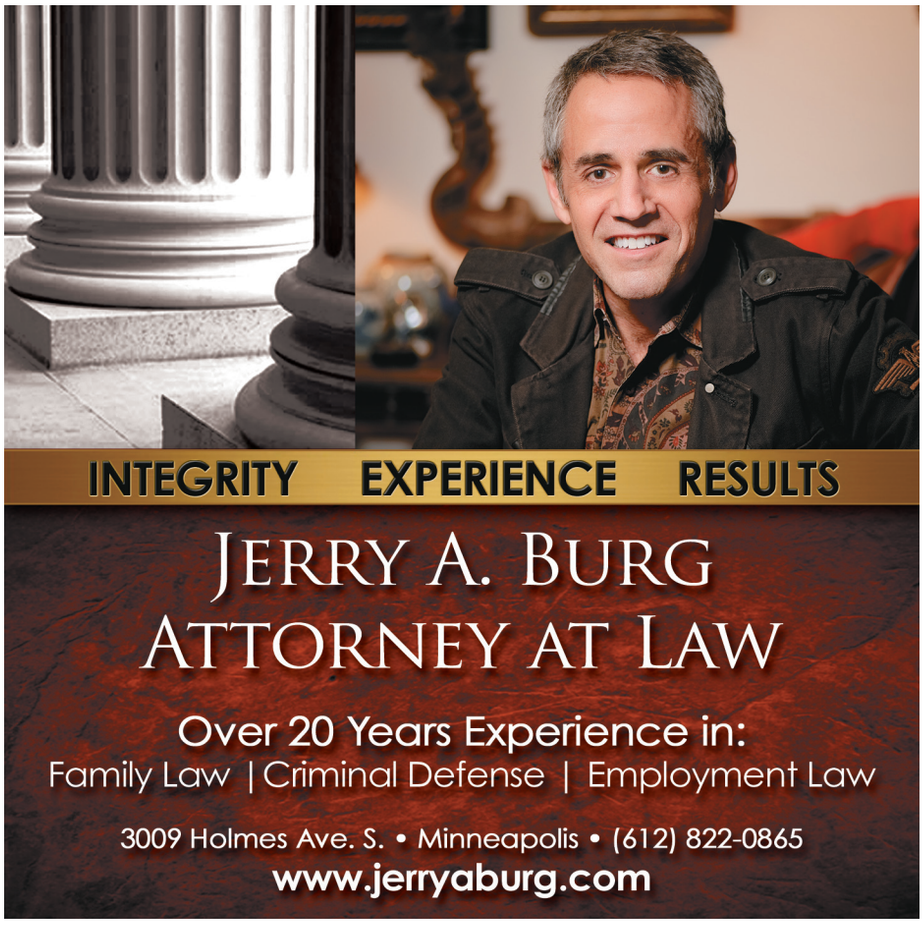
When I was in prep school and college there were, respectively, none and a handful of students of color. Homosexuality was not talked about out loud, so who knows how many gays there were? Today, gay students are out and proud, and freshmen of color comprise 42% of my college's Class of 2016.

Fear of change, not empirical evidence, fuels the hatred of racists and homophobes. Editorializing on Vatican Radio, spokesman the Rev. Federico Lombardi likened gay marriage to polygamy and polyandry. "Monogamous marriage between a man and woman is an achievement of civilization," Lombardi asserted. Never mind that for millennia before the Catholic Church existed there were many other ways for humans to bond. One theory is that back when hunter-gatherers lived in groups, paternity did not matter–not because the people were sinful backsliders, but because the group raised the offspring. The introduction of agriculture, land ownership and questions of inheritance made it important who sired whom. In other cultures, polyandry, polygamy (reread the Bible) existed.

Writing in 1957, famed religious historian Mircea Eliade commented on the West's coming into contact with ethnicities formerly regarded as part of the "primitive" world: "For some time past, the West has been no longer the only 'Maker of History.' Which means among other things, that Western culture will be in danger of a decline into a sterilizing provincialism if it despises or neglects the dialogue with the other cultures."

As the world both broadens and constricts, westerners will increasingly face cultures and practices which they do not personally embrace. We do not have to accept and adjust, but the consequences of refusal will be dire.

Heed former First Lady Barbara Bush's admonitions–they apply to both political parties and established religions as well: "They are going to have to compromise. It's not a dirty word." □





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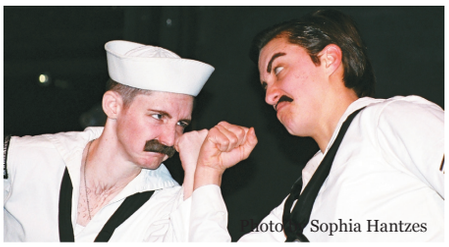

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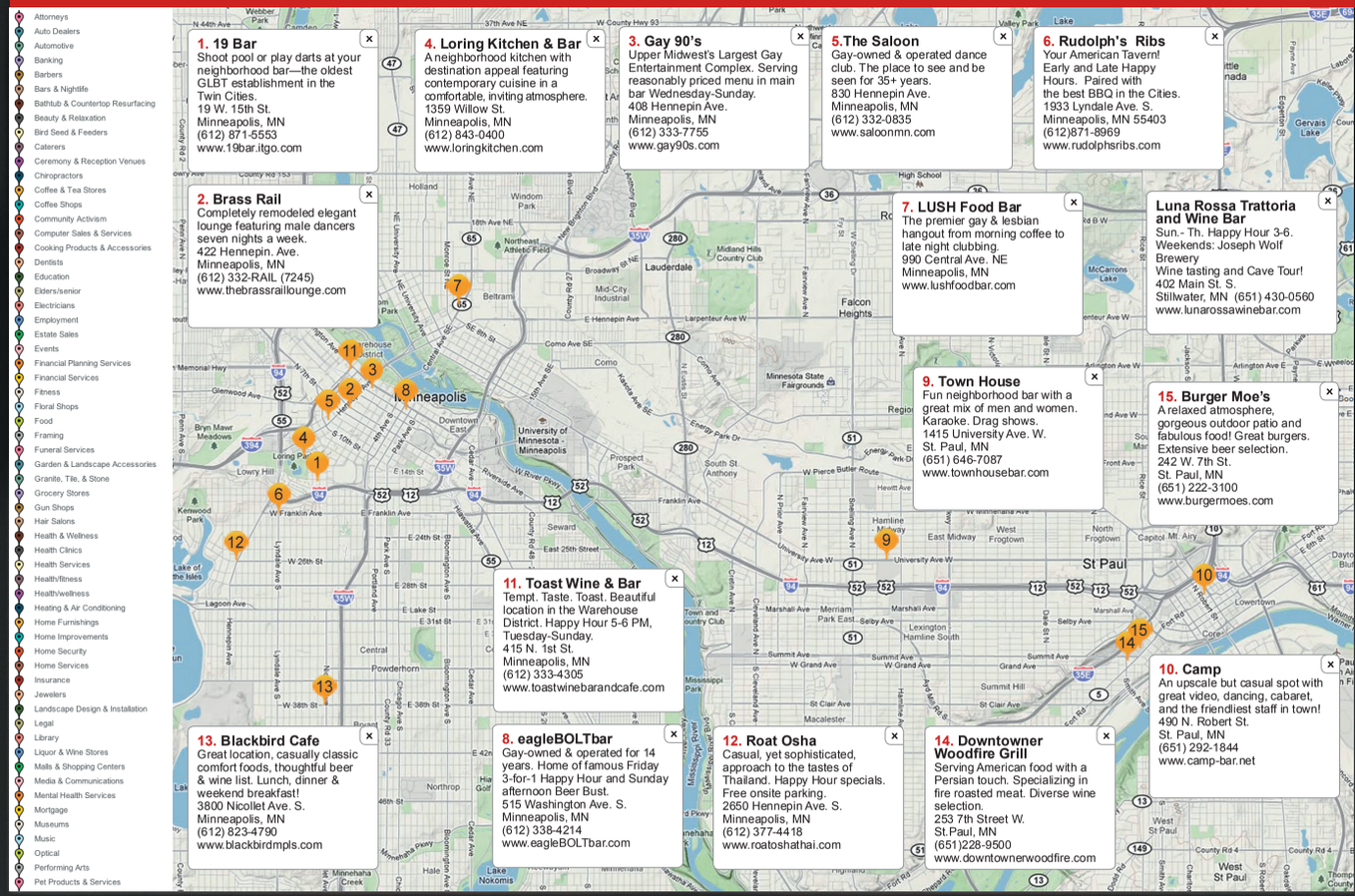
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SLICE | Joy Summers

Landing at The Lynn on Bryant, a comfortable place to be

There's a new meeting place for the Lynnhurst neighborhood. The block of businesses that were once devastated by fire now shows no sign of the destruction that was once here. It's been reborn as a thriving hub of restaurants and shops. The completion of the rebirth was the opening of The Lynn on Bryant.

The men behind this new spot are Jay Peterson and Peter Ireland. Jay was a long-time manager of the independent book store Magers & Quinn. Peter is a chef from Vermont who has cooked all over the world, from Beijing to France as well as a restaurant-style soup kitchen in Vermont.

Both had hopes and plans for a restaurant that would be a part of the community. The food would be sourced directly from farms, fresh and sustainable. The space would be somewhere for families and friends to gather. The two also have a shared passion for farm fresh food that comes directly from the source. They believe in supporting those who work the land in a sustainable fashion. They took their idea to Kickstarter and began a fundraising campaign. Incentives included





(From top left) Baba Rhum; burger and fries with a tall Blonde; owners Peter Ireland (left) and Jay Peterson; croque madame. Photos by Hubert Bonnet





a family-style dinner at their communal table, names etched into custom- made branch coat hooks, handmade baskets filled with preserved goodies; each incentive reflective of the communal feeling they hoped to foster. The fundraiser was successful, with them exceeding their goal and soon, The Lynn on Bryant opened their doors.

On my first visit, my companion remarked, "It looks like Ikea, but… classy."

"And you don't have to put anything together!" enthused another.

The long, white communal table dominates the front room, where the décor is clean and bright with rustic touches, like a focal wall decorated with reclaimed wood, with just a sliver of red accent paint visible between the slats. It's sunny, bright and welcoming.

Past the open kitchen, the back room is cozier with soft lighting, no windows and soft acoustics.

They serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They also have a slew of house made pastries (with just a few items such as chocolate croissant brought in from nearby Patisserie 46). Anyone lucky enough to have this spot in the path of their morning commute can duck in for a cup of ultra rich, perfectly roasted coffee and a scone or gluten-free muffin to jumpstart the work day. The coffee was consulted upon by Andrew Kopplin – local brew guru and owner of St. Paul's Kopplin's Coffee and it tastes like it. This is beyond your average cup. The scones include some flavors like a candied ginger-studded number packed with fresh, local apples, fluffy and perfectly crumbly.

Breakfast items include a few variations on fresh, local eggs like steamed Florentine: sautéed spinach topped with an egg that is gently cooked in a hinge-topped jar or their soft-boiled eggs that are served in pristine little cups alongside crispy little toast fingers.

The French toast is actually a fat slice of egg and butter redolent brioche served with a side of amber-hued, real maple syrup. They know their way around a sweet tooth. Try the Baba Rhum, brioche buns sandwiching a generous amount of vanilla whipped cream →

Continued on page 32





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Cedar Rapids skyline; NewBo City Market; restaurant at the Kirkwood Hotel. Photos courtesy of Cedar Rapids Area CVB

TAKING IT FOR GRANTED

Factoid for the day: The most recognized, and lampooned, painting in the world is the *Mona Lisa*. Coming in a strong second is Grant Wood's *American Gothic*, a stoic Iowa farmer and his spouse. The Chicago Art Institute snapped it up for $300 back in the day and ain't selling. But fans of the founder of Regionalism can bask in his painted celebrations of flatly-rolling hills dotted with popcorn trees or earnest portraits cached in his hometown of Cedar Rapids.

The city's art museum represents a melding of a former Carnegie library with an avant new addition sporting "Grecian" pillars in baby-blue and a palm-studded conservatory lounge. It sports the world's largest collection of the artist's works—almost 300—which include jewelry and a rough-hewn bench produced by the students in the high school where Wood once taught woodworking; it sat outside the principal's office and bears the inscribed admonishment "The Way of the Transgressor is Hard." But it's the paintings—those paeans to Middle America—that cause your jaw to drop.

Like Dorothy, Wood discovered that there's no place like home. After studying at our own MCAD, and a stint in France absorbing the Impressionists' style, he chose to return to Cedar Rapids to paint what he knew and loved best. A few blocks further on stands his miniscule loft apartment-cum-studio, which he designed in a sort of Surrealism meets Frank Lloyd Wright style—curvy white walls and built-ins (but no stove, only a hot plate), which he shared with his mother and, often, sister Nan, his frequent models. As a docent points out, the famous *Lady with Plant* painting on display is mom holding her potted mother-in-law's-tongue, whose very spears reappear today on the receptionist's desk. (The docent also shares a wicked story about his get-even-with-conservatives painting of Ladies of the D.A.R., one of whom appears to be George Washington in drag.)

Grant Wood also fabricated a Lady Victory stained-glass mural in the V.A. building, damaged by the great flood of 2008 and soon to reopen to visitors. You can also find an example of his work in the magnificent Brucemoor Mansion, set amid 26 wooded acres. Owned by a succession of three families, its matriarchs designed the estate to favor their talents: one an avid gardener, one a musician (a mural of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* circles the entry hall), another a bookbinder who filled the library. A daughter begged for a swimming pool and was told to expect a surprise beginning with P when she returned for boarding school. And here's where Wood comes in again: Surprise, Barbara—the artist designed and decorated a porch for your room. (She later got her pool.)

Not to be outdone, Dad got his man cave in the basement, the Tahitian Room that looks like Hawaii gone awry, complete with rain wall. And where other manly men might keep a hunting dog, this guy kept a lion—and not just any lion, but the one from the MGM logo.

Speaking of films, the fellow, who clearly had connections, was allowed to visit the set while *Gone With the Wind* was being filmed—and bring his home-movie camera.

Thus, the visitors' center runs the reel catching Clark Gable puffing a ciggie and Olivia de Haviland getting her makeup refreshed.

Speaking of refreshing, that monumental flood of 2008 devastated much of the town. Everywhere I went, the high-water mark was painted higher than my head, such as on the walls of Zins, a stylish café where small plates flourish, such as brunch's benedict Oscar, chicken-fried steak, and eggs with andouille gravy or dinner's almond trout, mojito lamb lollipops, and sweet-potato gnocchi.

FEMA funding and a major burst of civic spirit have turned those floodwaters to lemonade, allowing for widening downtown sidewalks to accommodate outdoor tables and installing a new riverside amphitheater. The classic Paramount Theater of 1928 is ready to re-open with its gorgeous chandelier and bronze doors repaired, alongside a 21st-century wish list of amenities. A new library, fronting a Saturday farmers market, replaces the old site of drowned books. The riverside Czech and Slovak Museum has been repositioned and expanded to showcase a gift shop of Czech glass, from delicate Christmas ornaments to art and dinner ware. Its current exhibit of Czech artist Alphonse Mucha's Art Nouveau posters (think Sarah Bernhardt) makes its only North American stop before visiting Japan.

The African American Museum of Iowa depicts that floodline, too, but again has been refurbished and enlarged to tell its story, from slave ships to plantation life, from Iowa's underground railroad and slave owners in Dubuque to sit-ins at a Des Moines drugstore.

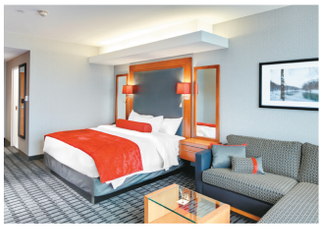
CSPS, originally a Czech social hall, now rises anew from the slime as a new arts center, hosting theaters, galleries, a coffeehouse, and a bookstore. And across the street here in NewBo (as in Bohemia), an indoor market is poised to open, incorporating 23 vendors, from cheese to cupcakes, artisan bread to artisan beer and wine, along with live music and a cooking-class facility operated by Kirkwood Community College, which also owns and runs the vibrant, new Kirkwood Hotel, outswanking any W. Its restaurant—rightly called Class Act—again salutes small plates, such as truffled gnocchi with crab and sweet corn, crab cakes with pineapple salsa and Creole remoulade, and tacos carnitas.

Davenport, an hour or so east, is the arts-forward component of the Quad Cities of Iowa and Illinois that coalesce on the banks of the Mississippi, so it's the next stop for those channeling Grant Wood. The Figge, launched in 2005 as a showpiece art museum that "out-Walkers" the Walker, displays Wood's self-portrait, his actual easel, palette, and suitcase, along with those iconic little, round spectacles, his silver cigarette case, and his baby spoon. It also showcases works of fellow Regionalists like Marsden Hartley, Thomas Hart Benton, and Frank Lloyd Wright (okay, non-Regionalists like Chagall and Picasso, too).

A few blocks away, Bucktown Center for the Arts salutes the Quad's up-and-comers. The cooperative rents its 15 galleries to local artists who, in turn, are free to sublet a wall or three to fellow artists—painters, photographers, weavers, a sculptor (he's 14), and more, who create elegant-to-edgy art for our times.

Then cross the bridge to Moline, a company town, and that company is John Deere. Trace Deere's history from John's invention of a horse-drawn plow with a metal blade replacing the typical wooden one on up to the $500,000 combine onto which visitors are free to scramble. Tour the founder's elegant mansion if you wish, then head to the corporate headquarters where—surprise!—corridors are lined with life-sized drawings by Grant Wood of the working-class folks who populated his world. □









(Clockwise from top left) Bar at the Zins café; Cedar Rapids Art Museum; Brucemoor Mansion; room at Kirkwood Hotel.

SIDE BAR

To plan your trip, visit www.cedar-rapids.com and www.visitquadcities.com.

Gay Cedar Rapids
Belles Basix: open until 2am and remember, some of these drag queens might be married; it's legal in Iowa!

Gay Davenport
The Rainbow District promises a night full of possibilities.
Connections Night Club: check out the tiki bar.
Mary's on 2nd: "Always a Good Drink at a Fair Price."

SENIOR

Living

Aging With Dignity, A

GLBT adults who were surveyed were "nearly twice as likely to be a caregiver" to a parent or a partner.

Though GLBT adults may be providing more care to others, the survey also noted that GLBT adults were "more likely to live alone, less likely to have a caregiver, and less likely to have children."



, Aging With Care

BY KATHLEEN WATSON



As the Baby Boomer Generation reaches retirement, a large portion of our society is now faced with issues relating to aging. More importantly, GLBT Baby Boomers—the individuals who sparked the Stonewall era, watched many friends die during the AIDS epidemic, and are now seeing marriage equality slowly spread across the country—are faced with the issue of finding care for themselves or their loved ones that will allow them to enjoy their final years with dignity and respect. These individuals greatly need services that don't force them back into the closet, but rather embrace and celebrate their experiences while providing care designed to support all individuals—including the GLBT community.

In 2012, PFund and the United Way joined together to create the "2012 Twin Cities LGBT Aging Needs Assessment Survey Report." This report, based off results from a community-wide survey, assessed the needs of the senior GLBT community in relation to what is currently being provided. When a similar survey was conducted in 2002, GLBT respondents noted a significantly alarming lack of confidence with regard to being treated with respect by aging service providers. The goal of this assessment, therefore, was to monitor the improvements of the community's perception to aging services and point out areas that can still improve.

Along with providing information about the GLBT community's experiences and perceptions to aging services, this survey assessment provides a deep look into the aging GLBT community—particularly regarding who is looking for care, what the community's needs are, and how the GLBT aging community differs from the general aging public. According to this survey, the GLBT adults who were surveyed were "nearly twice as likely to be a caregiver" to a parent or a partner. Though GLBT adults may be providing more care to others, the survey also noted that GLBT adults were "more likely to live alone, less likely to have a caregiver, and less likely to have children." Also, survey participants were more likely than the general public to have health-care directives that describe their wishes regarding care, finances, and visitation rights.

The needs assessment also noted that, with the exception of support groups, the majority of survey participants preferred services to be GLBT-welcoming over GLBT-specific. This suggests a desire to be connected to the greater community and to be treated like everyone else. Therefore, the need for GLBT-friendly and -educated service providers is great.

Whether you're currently 62 or 22, close your eyes and imagine what your life will be like 20, 30, even 40 years down the line. What will you do? Where will you live? Who will assist you with tasks that have become more dif- ↦

Continued on page 40

This suggests a desire to be connected to the greater community and to be treated like everyone else.

SENIOR

Living



Prime Timers in Minneapolis. Photo courtesy of Harry Hartigan

ficult to do by yourself? Where will you go to receive the dignified care and respect you deserve? These questions may initially cause fear, anxiety, or uncertainty. But, with the multitude of GLBT-friendly resources for aging adults in the Twin Cities, you can think and prepare for your future knowing you'll be in good hands. Imagine yourself remaining active in the community. Imagine yourself living in a place where you can safely be yourself and be treated with respect. Imagine yourself being surrounded by loved ones, your friends, and your chosen family. Finally, imagine yourself aging with dignity in a community that truly has your best interests in mind.

The following pages provide a deeper look into local aging resources that have the best interests of GLBT individuals in mind. Whether you're looking for ways to stay active in the community, trying to find a care provider for your partner, searching for a place to live, or preparing for your future, the continually expanding services in the Twin Cities area will help you plan your future with ease.

ACTIVE: Out To Brunch and Prime Timers

Growing older doesn't mean your social life should dwindle. In fact, the importance of social activity increases with age! Within the GLBT community, however, it is sometimes difficult to engage in social interactions outside of the bar or club scene, especially if you're not as young or spry as you used to be. Recognizing the need for seniors to connect to others in the community, two notable GLBT-oriented social groups provide activities and programming to keep you young at heart. Out To Brunch and Prime Timers allow individuals to meaningfully connect with others with similar interests, making the GLBT community accessible and inviting.

Out To Brunch, an organization created "to provide a safe, friendly, social network for all lesbian oriented women, regardless of race, creed, age or ability," has been active in the Twin Cities since 1985. Members enjoy a monthly newsletter with information for numerous upcoming social activities, including Country Dancing, book clubs, movie nights, and educational programming. With activities all across the metro area, opportunities for fun and friendship are endless. Annual membership dues are $15 for a single membership and $26 for couples.

Also keeping a high profile in the community are members of Prime Timers. The Minneapolis/Saint Paul chapter, which has been around for 13 years, is part of a larger network of Prime Timers Worldwide. As an organization with a mission to "provide mature gay and bisexual men, and their admirers, with opportunities to come together in a supportive atmosphere to enjoy social, educational, and recreational activities," the Twin Cities chapter of Prime Timers truly lives up to its goal.

Harry Hartigan, the current President of Prime Timers MSP, recalls the first meeting of the MSP chapter in 1999. "The night of our first meeting there were lots of men in attendance (seemed like 200 or more) all looking for a place to socialize and meet other gay and bi-sexual men. I joined that very night, I was number 15. I remember many of the faces from that evening. Some of the men have since passed on, some have moved to other places and many are still here."

Hartigan notes that the group "bridges the generational divide within the community" by providing opportunities for men in their "50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s" to socialize with each other and with younger men. Some activities include getting together for a monthly discussion group at Wilde Roast Café, singing show tunes at The Bolt Video on Sundays, gathering for movie nights, and planning several reoccurring breakfast groups.

Another important part of Prime Timers is volunteerism. Along with volunteering for many local GLBT groups, their outreach with a local group called Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly is noteworthy. Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly is a group which provides support and companionship to elderly men who don't have family in the area. This volunteering is just another way that Prime Timers creates what Hartigan calls a "safe and supportive way to socialize…for mature gay and bi men."

Prime Timers encourages its members to stay active in the community and treasure the connections made through the organization's social activities. In a recent letter in the Prime Timers monthly newsletter, Hartigan says, "Over the past thirteen years as a member of Prime Timers MSP, I have met incredible men, made lifelong friends, and have had lots of fun in the process."

Continued on page 42

Growing older doesn't mean your social life should dwindle.

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SENIOR

Living



Trusting relationships are key to home health assistance.
Photo courtesy of Right at Home

Providing: Training to Serve

When considering who will provide the care for you or your loved ones, it's important to determine which providers have the proper resources and training to welcome and accommodate GLBT consumers with dignity, intelligence, and respect. According to the previously mentioned 2012 Twin Cities LGBT Aging Needs Assessment Survey Report, less than one in five respondents were confident they would receive quality care from providers of aging services due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. To combat that fear of discrimination—and to give providers the tools they need to support GLBT consumers—Training to Serve provides custom training sessions to help service providers learn more about the GLBT aging demographic.

Jennifer Smith, Operations Coordinator for Training to Serve, states, "One of the most basic and ongoing challenges LGBT elders face is homophobia and discrimination due to the lack of awareness of sexual orientation issues among health and community service providers. As a result, LGB&T elders are much less likely to access these services than their heterosexual peers. When services are not accessed as needed, it makes LGBT elders more susceptible to psychosocial issues and challenges such as isolation, depression, substance abuse, and institutionalization." Another challenge GLBT individuals may face is lack of legal recognition of partners, especially when it comes to visitation and decisions.

Training to Serve was created after a 2007 survey conducted by Minnesota's Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging noted the lack of resources to train interested service providers on GLBT issues. Since then, Training to Serve has trained over 1,200 individuals. Smith notes that the training includes a brief historical and cultural overview of the GLBT world as well as a discussion of the health disparities between GLBT and heterosexual people, focusing on how those experiences "affect who they are today and why they may be resistant accessing services as they age."

Deborah Delaney from Flagship Franchises sings the praises of Training to Serve: "I can't tell you how wonderful that group is. They're training assisted living facilities; they're training day and in-home health. It was the most incredible training." She suggests looking for care providers who have gone through Training to Serve programming when individuals are looking for care for themselves or loved ones. Training to Serve truly gives senior care providers the tools and knowledge needed to properly care for GLBT seniors with compassion and respect.

Caring: Flagship Franchises/ SarahCare and Right at Home

Many GLBT individuals find themselves in a caregiving role—whether it is for parents, partners, or friends. Often, the need for more professional medical care is warranted, but the fear of discrimination or improper care prevents caregivers from entrusting their loved ones into the care of medical professionals. But, with SarahCare (part of Flagship Franchises) and Right At Home, individuals can rest assured that they will be treated with the highest level of care from professionals trained to accommodate GLBT persons.

SarahCare in Savage provides adult day care to individuals, allowing caretakers to be relieved of their duties for part of the day. Deborah Delaney, founder and CEO of Flagship Franchises, connected with SarahCare eight years ago to bring adult day care services to Minnesota. A unique aspect of SarahCare is that it is based on a true medical-social model, which Delaney describes as, "We handle product care management here. We take on some very challenging individuals, and we do not turn people away because of their sex, religion, and race."

Delaney also notes the reluctance of GLBT people to be open and honest due to anticipated reluctance by care providers to accept same-sex relationships and transgender issues. She says, "To me, it's really heartbreaking because a lot of them have been ostracized from their families, so they don't even have caretakers from their family." The goal then is to find care where individuals can be open and honest. Delaney trains her staff through Training to Serve to be supportive and compassionate to all people. "If you can't be open-minded and honest and help these people in their journey—if you have any type of discrimination at all—you just can't work here. It's a journey that needs to be respected."

Flagship Franchises hopes people realize they will be treated with dignity and respect "because they are human

SarahCare in Savage provides adult day care to individuals, allowing caretakers to be relieved of their duties for part of the day.

SENIOR

Living



Spirit on Lake, GLBT-specific housing in Minneapolis.
Rendering courtesy of PRG, Inc.

beings." Delaney stresses, "We're very focused on parallel programming, where you put a small group of people together within their challenges, and they have therapeutic programming. Every individual has a unique plan based on their social, emotional, and medical needs."

If in-home care is needed, individuals can look to Right at Home, where the Bloomington franchise is actually gay-owned and -operated. Paul Blom and Bob White, who are celebrating 19 years as a couple, build the culture of the company around "mutual respect and care for everyone." Right at Home provides companionship while assisting with homemaking, physical assistance, hygiene, wellness, nursing, and more. Clients can create custom care plans to reflect the care they need and desire.

Paul Blom notes the fear that many GLBT individuals have regarding care comes from how GLBT people have been historically treated. "This is a generation of people that lived through a very different period of history than many of us have experienced. Some examples of the things that our current LGBT Elders experienced that shape the way they are or aren't willing to be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity: In the 1930s, homosexuals were given ECT [Electroconvulsive Therapy] Treatment to try to cure their homosexuality. In 1943, lesbian and gays were banned from the US military. In 1960, Illinois was the FIRST state to decriminalize intimate same-sex relationships…It wasn't until 1973 that homosexuality was removed from the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders."

The historical and cultural experiences of GLBT people affect how they respond to the idea of in-home care—making them wary of outside assistance. Blom recalls, "I recently had an elderly gay couple in their eighties that was referred to our services by their elder law attorney. After several conversations on the phone, they decided that they were ready to meet with us. They were, however, not ready to have us come to their home, so we met in our offices." Prior to press, Blom noted that the couple allowed Right at Home to visit the home, marking the first time the couple had visitors in over 20 years.

Right at Home truly understands the importance of creating trusting relationships with clients. Blom also says their intake process is indicative of the equal treatment, inclusion, and respect clients can expect. "We don't assume that everyone is heterosexual. We don't ask if the person was married, we ask them to tell us about their significant relationships and social support system. By making it clear that we are not making assumptions about sexual orientation or gender identity, we make it clear that their answer will not be received with judgment."

Living: Spirit on Lake and Village Shores

One main concern with regard to aging is where to live. Many GLBT individuals who have lived on their own for most of their lives may feel isolated, or they may begin to see a large home or a large garden as a burden when daily maintenance chores become more cumbersome. Independent living facilities become more attractive to aging people who want to be able to enjoy their lives and manage their living spaces more effectively. Village Shores, located in Richfield, and the soon-to-be constructed Spirit on Lake in Minneapolis both offer seniors a warm and welcoming home regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

GLBT-friendly and GLBT-specific living facilities are much needed by the community. Barbara Satin, a 78-year-old transwoman who devotes the majority of her time to faith issues and aging issues, recognizes the need for GLBT housing: "Aging issues are often neglected within the LGBT community, and the special needs and concerns that LGBT people have as we age are not well understood by senior care providers." Satin notes that the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging also affirms the differences between the heterosexual aging experience and the GLBT aging experience, saying that GLBT individuals are "twice as likely to be single, four times as likely to be without children, twice the poverty rate, and twice as likely to delay health care." Because the GLBT community doesn't have the same safety net that many others enjoy, the need for a stable, supportive environment increases.

For people who are looking for a GLBT-welcoming (but not GLBT-specific) living association, Village Shores in Richfield offers many amenities and perks for its residents. Apartments ranging from one bedroom to two bedrooms/two bathrooms allow people 55 and over to choose the amount of space they need. Along with traditional independent living, Village Shores offers an Assisted Living Neighborhood where residents can get the personal care they need to

Continued on page 44

"Aging issues are often neglected within the LGBT community." —Barbara Satin



live with dignity and ease. Residents can also enjoy in-house dining, a variety of community activities, heated parking, shuttle services to health care providers, and more.

Anne Janda, the Campus Director, notes that the atmosphere of Village Shore is "friendly, comfortable, and quiet—but active—safe, and happy." With access to many local businesses and restaurants, as well as organized activities inside and outside of the apartment complex, residents are able to choose how they spend their time. Janda stresses the importance of having "SENIOR-friendly senior living establishments where people can continue to live life as usual when they decide that owning a home is no longer for them. "

If you're looking for a GLBT-specific housing opportunity, Spirit on Lake (built on Spirit of the Lakes Church property and estimated to be open for residents in 2013) aims to live up to its motto: "Capture the Spirit of Living Out." With 46 affordable units (available to individuals and households earning less than 50% Area Median Income) ranging in size, an exercise room, heated parking, community spaces, and a rental space for a GLBT non-profit, Barbara Satin says the feel of Spirit on Lake is "definitely not [like] an old folk's home—urban, contemporary, and independent."

In addition to providing access to affordable housing, Spirit on Lake will also have five units available specifically for individuals who have experienced homelessness as part of "Minnesota's effort to end homelessness." All residents will be able to enjoy the close proximity to Abbott Northwestern Hospitals and Clinics, Midtown Global Exchange, the Midtown Greenway, and public transportation.

The Spirit on Lake housing project was initiated by GLBT Generations and Spirit of the Lakes Church, which now are partnering with PRG (a local non-profit housing developer) and Everwood Development Company. Satin notes that the plans for the building have been modified since its original envisioning, saying, "Through significant challenges posed by the collapse of the housing market, the project has continued to move forward. The focus of the project has changed from cooperative (ownership) housing to affordable rental."

As one of the strongest public advocates for Spirit on Lake, Barbara Satin shares why she is so active in supporting the aging GLBT community. She says, "Part of my rationale for being involved with aging issues is pure self-interest: I am old, and I want to be sure when I need care that those who provide it are aware of my issues, are sensitive to my needs and concerns, and are respectful in the way in which they deal with me as a transgender woman. The only way I can be sure that will happen is if I get involved directly to be sure such sensitivity and awareness is there for all my LGBT sisters and brothers." Satin's sentiment is truly a reflection of "Capturing the Spirit of Living Out," and Spirit on Lake will continue to connect and inspire all individuals who live there.

With all the resources available in the Twin Cities area, and the commitment the area has made to continue to improve the way it meets the needs of GLBT seniors, there is no need to fear growing old. Such strong support allows individuals to make educated and personalized decisions as to how they will spend their final years. Remaining active through Out To Brunch or Prime Timers, trusting the care of yourself or your loved ones to Trained to Serve-certified providers like SarahCare and Right at Home, or living at GLBT-welcoming establishments like Village Shores and Spirit on Lake will allow you to continue to enjoy everything life has to offer. After all, shouldn't life get better with age? □

Resources:

Out to Brunch: www.outtobrunch.org.
Prime Timers: www.primetimersww.com/ptmsp
Training to Serve: www.trainingtoserve.org
SarahCare: www.sarahcaremn.com.
Right at Home: www.rightathome.net/twincities
Village Shores: www.villageshoresseniorcommunity.com
Spirit on Lake: www.spiritonlake.org

Sources used and considered:

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Living with Mom

photo essay by Edie Karras

She's Mom's Dog Now.

INTRODUCING EDIE KARRAS AND PEGGY MCKENNA'S FAMILY, INCLUDING THEIR SON, GALEN, AND PEGGY'S MOTHER, BETTY MCKENNA. IN EDIE'S WORDS:

"Two and a half years ago my partner and I decided to move her mother into our home to live out her remaining years. We never thought 'easy,' but neither did we realize the complete and profound impact this would have on our daily lives. Throw in a 7-year-old son and a partner entering grad school (yet still working full time) and you might get a sense. While my world shrank, my photography–blessedly–grew in ways I never expected. The work became extremely localized: my house, my yard, my street (seriously, sometimes I'm stuck in a 2-mile radius for weeks). Other impacts included the purchase of iPhones and joining the milieu of social media. My mother-in-law is now 85 and frail but continues to enrich all of our lives. She'll never fully realize how her presence affects me as an artist and I thank her many times over."

Edie and her family live in the Powderhorn Park neighborhood of Minneapolis. Her full photography collection spans 20 years and includes abstract textures and close-ups as well as more traditional subjects like nature, people, animals, the neighborhood, and much more. The family's four-legged members, Samba (dog) and Sprite (cat) make plenty of appearances in the life that is lived in that "2-mile radius." Edie's photography can be found at www.etsy.com/shop/photosbyedie as well as at Finch's Holiday Boutique in Minnetonka December 8 & 9 (finchsboutique.blogspot.com) and the Women's Art Festival at the Midtown YWCA on December 15 (www.womensartfestival.com). –Andy Lien



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Portrait: Betty Jean McKenna



Welcome Home, Mom!

BIG GAY NEWS

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NEW YORK CITY:

Storm-Wrecked NY Gay Youth Center Gets Quick Help

Edge Boston reports that while it took only hours for Superstorm Sandy's surging waters to destroy an emergency drop-in center for homeless gay youths, almost as quickly, a social media outpouring helped raise money for a new, bigger Ali Forney Center to keep helping dozens of young people a day with medical care, counseling and a safe place to sleep. Carl Siciliano founded the drop-in center in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood 10 years ago, naming it after Ali Forney, a gay 22-year-old who was shot to death on a Harlem street in 1997. A blogger picked up Siciliano's Facebook posting about damage to the center, and it quickly went viral, tweeted to hundreds of thousands of followers by actors Pam Grier and Joseph Gordon-Levitt. In the first three days, the center received almost 1,000 donations totaling more than $100,000. That total has grown to more than $250,000 – and counting – with contributions coming from around the world, including England, France, Sweden, Canada and Mexico.

HAMPSHIRE:

Stacie Laughton, New Hampshire's First Transgender Legislator, Hopes To Inspire Others

The *Huffington Post* reports that New Hampshire joins neighboring Maine in making history this Election Night, welcoming its very first transgender lawmaker as Stacie Laughton, a Democrat, beat out two Republican candidates for one of three seats in the state's House of Representatives in Ward 4. In an interview, Laughton told the *Telegraph*'s Joseph G. Cote that she hopes her victory will inspire other lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) candidates in both local and national politics. "I don't want being transgender to be a focal point," Laughton said at the time. "I want to stand on the issues...because of who I am, I believe I can work between party lines and not let political partisanship hold us up when it comes to the important matters before us at the Statehouse."

UNITED STATES:

Gay Star Matt Bomer Among Those Honored In People's "Sexiest Man Alive" Issue

Gay Star News reports that while his Magic Mike co-star Channing Tatum may be *People* magazine's newly-crowned 'Sexiest Man Alive', Matt Bomer fans are no doubt happy to see the popular actor also featured in the issue. The magazine usually features several runners-up in no particular order and this year Bomer is the only openly gay actor in the bunch. The 35-year-old came out publicly earlier this year while accepting am award. He and partner Simon Halls, a powerful entertainment industry agent, are raising three children together.

CHICAGO:

Gay Marriage Emanuel's Number 3 Priority For Legislature

The *Chicago Sun-Times* reports that Mayor Rahm Emanuel Tuesday ranked legalizing gay marriage as his No. 3 legislative priority in Springfield — behind pension reform and a Chicago casino — and said he plans to get "very involved" in passing a gay marriage bill. Emanuel offered the surprise ranking when asked whether he intends to go around Gov. Pat Quinn — by cutting deals with Democratic legislative leaders — now that both houses have veto-proof Democratic majorities.
The mayor responded that it was time for Springfield to focus on "a number of subjects — and the governor has to be a part of that."

NEBRASKA:

Rainbow GSA Spreads Its Message On A Snowplow

JournalStar.com reports that one of Lincoln (Nebraska)'s snowplows will be pushing a message of tolerance and acceptance, thanks to those who turned the blade into a rainbow. Trent Kersten, an 11-grader and member of the Lincoln Northeast High School Rainbow Gay Straight Alliance, whose members spent Thursday afternoon in the back parking lot of the school painting the blade, said: "I thought it would be a good idea because everyone sees this, because it's Nebraska and it never doesn't snow." Kersten hopes it will create more awareness – and better acceptance of all people as it pushes snow from the streets.

URUGUAY:

Socially Liberal Uruguay Already Has Civil Unions, Now Considering Same-Sex Marriage Law

KSPR 33 reports that Uruguay's congress is considering a gay marriage law that would give same-sex couples all the same rights and responsibilities of heterosexual married couples. The proposed "marriage equality" law would change Uruguay's nearly-century-old civil code and give married gays and lesbians all the rights and responsibilities of heterosexual married couples, including the possibility of adopting children. Federico Grana, a member of the collective, told The Associated Press on Wednesday: "Today's society is much broader than the heterosexual, and the civil code should reflect this: a marriage institution that applies equally to all. This goes well beyond homosexuality — it's a law that gives all the same rights and responsibilities."

VATICAN CITY:

Vatican Digs In After Gay Marriage Advances

WIBW.com reports that the Vatican is digging in after gay marriage initiatives scored big wins this week in the U.S. and Europe, vowing to never stop insisting that marriage can only be between a man and a woman. In a front-page article in Saturday's Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, the Holy See sought to frame itself as the lone voice of courage in opposing initiatives to give same-sex couples legal recognition. Catholic teaching holds that homosexuals should be respected and treated with dignity but that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered." The Vatican also opposes same-sex marriage, insisting on the sanctity of marriage between a man and woman as the foundation for society.

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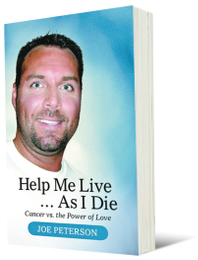
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HELP ME LIVE AS I DIE
–A Memoir of Celebration

JOE PETERSON AND KELLY BOEDIGHEIMER met in 1998, introduced one another to their respective families shortly after, and remained together for the next thirteen-and-a-half years. Their cancer journey, the subject of Peterson's memoir, began in August of 2010 when what Kelly thought was a minor bump on his chin was actually an aggressive melanoma.

Help Me live as I Die starts with Peterson's entry of Monday, February 7, 2011, and ends with Kel's death on Halloween, 2011. But the book was not intended to be–nor is it–a book about death. It is a celebration of love; between Joe and Kel, between the couple and their family, friends, coworkers, and finally, about Kel's love of life itself.

Lavender recently talked with Peterson about the book, the couple's life together, their very marriedness enduring in a state that still does not allow a loving, devoted same-sex couple to join in matrimony.

E.B. Boatner: Kelly knew in those last nine months you were writing this journal. When did you decide to publish it, and did Kelly join in on its creation?

Joe Peterson: Once I heard about CaringBridge, I took it upon myself to create a profile where we could share Kelly's progression. Three months into sharing, thousands of hits on Kelly's CB page and feedback from others telling me that our journals were helping them deal with their own loss-that was when I felt we were sharing something special; vulnerable, real aspects that comforted others. Our story was uniting many of us in ways neither of us expected.

In June, after much encouragement from several CaringBridge readers, I started thinking about turning our journal entries into a book. It wasn't until August when I finally told Kelly I had been talking with a publisher. Kelly was very private so this news caught him by surprise and was met with opposition. On Halloween eve 2011, I told Kelly his story was going to be shared. Though he wasn't speaking at that time, he made noises that voiced his disapproval.

I wouldn't have been able to publish this book if I had felt like Kelly would have continually disapproved. We were both aware how much his outlook on life had already helped others, and I believed his outlook would still reach others even after his passing.

E.B.: Do you see your story as part of the ammunition in the renewed struggle for same-sex marriage?

J.P.: Kelly and I discussed marriage and we wanted to be united, but only if we would be recognized by our state. After learning that our marrying rights were going to be on the ballot, we feared whether a "Yes" vote would be the majority. I told Kelly, "If Minnesota voters block our rights to be equal members of society, we need to move to a state that appreciates us." Our love was praised by those who knew us, yet we were still being judged by outsiders. Anyone reading Help Me Live would be able to put aside their prejudices, but only if they believe and realize the importance of love.

E.B.: You and Kelly were together for over thirteen years, and your families were behind you as well. How did others react? Were your parents an example to others in their communities?

J.P.: Throughout our relationship, Kelly and I had parties at our home. Our families and friends united under one roof. One observation was often shared: "You two have such a diverse group, and your parties are always so much fun." Kelly was always a kind soul, while I was the analytical one, and together we built very strong and different relations with others. Kelly's parents are very well-known within their community, social butterflies if you will. Kelly definitely acquired their ability to converse and make others feel welcome. I grew up the youngest of 12 and my parents' community was within our home. They successfully helped each family member attain his own identity while building our confidence. Kelly and I had different family upbringings, but we knew we were loved. Whether our parents were pillars in their community, they were pillars to us!

E.B.: Halloween marked the first anniversary of Kelly's passing. Could you speak to things you may have learned or considered in that time writing your memoir–how it can speak to others?

J.P.: Kelly passed away in the afternoon on Halloween, 2011. It took me an hour to realize he'd want me to be at home passing out candy–just like he would have been doing for our trick-or-treating guests. After inviting family and friends over, we celebrated the evening in Kelly style–fierce! My reaction on that day would become my consciousness for all of 2012–live in the moment. I set course to adopt Kelly's best traits as my own, while becoming a better version of myself. When I lost Kelly, my best friend, my partner, I grabbed onto the talks we shared leading up to his death. Every day we reminded ourselves to live and be grateful.

I have always believed that love is the most important aspect of life, and our story shows that. When Kelly left my side, my love and surrounding love was the ↦

Continued on page 54

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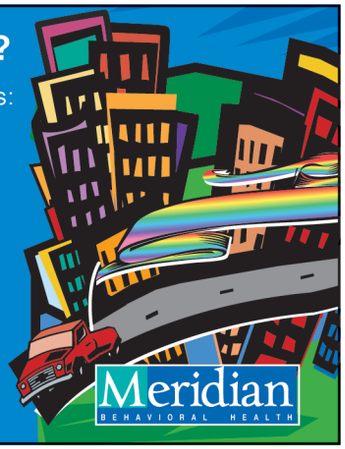
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only thing we could offer that accompanied him on his new travels.

E.B.: What would you say to those who remain adamantly against marriage for all citizens? Who would deprive others of the power of love and togetherness they enjoy?

J.P.: Regardless of what rules or regulations our government or individual people try to impose on my life, they will never succeed at stopping my loving ability. Kelly and I wanted marriage rights, but not having them didn't alter our love. Without intentionally doing so, our relationship opened the minds of others and swayed them to vote 'NO' on the ballot. There is so much fear that cripples the happiness one can attain. Despite others' views on my gay relations, I am living–and plan to continue living–happily and gaily in my daily life. The best way for me to educate others is by example, and I love love!

E.B.: How would you talk to these others? Is it simply a matter of time passing until the new growth springs up? Will it need to go to court as happened in the Civil Rights movement?

J.P.: The thing that confuses me most are people of race, color, sex, and so on, that had their rights fought for, but vote against equal rights for gays. Hatred is an easy way for people to feel better about themselves… unfortunately, sometimes an outcast just wants to be part of the popular group even if its wrong. We all deserve equal rights and we obviously have to speak out to attain them.

I witnessed a dying man bringing happiness into the lives of others, while at the same time he was educating them about living. Kelly accepted, loved and was proud of who he was. The prouder and happier we are, the more popular we become, and the power will shift. Acceptance begins internally, and without it, conflict continues.

E.B.: What more would you like to say, for you and Kelly?

The words "Till death do us part" have been spoken so often by so many couples and yet have often been disposed of so easily. Kelly and I worked through our challenges by working as a team and we proved that "till death do us part" was our vow.

His death certificate shouldn't read "single," but it does. The relationship we shared had everything to do with our desire to achieve a united happiness, and nothing to do with the laws or written limitations by others. Yes, we were frustrated for our inequality, but we still successfully made an impact and helped change the views of others.

Throughout Kelly's illness, our hopes, beliefs and love surpassed our own foreseen abilities. □



From CaringBridge to pages in a book, Joe Peterson helped Kelly live as he died. Photos courtesy of Joe Peterson

COMMENTARY | Brett Stevens

The DFL's Big Gay Farce

ON NOVEMBER 6th, 2012, the people of Minnesota defeated an amendment to the state constitution that would have made the definition of marriage solely between one man and one woman. An enormous movement grew to oppose this amendment and in the end it was defeated. As a gay man with a life partner, I opposed the amendment but knew what was really happening. A bitter, disjointed DFL was using this issue as a wedge to regain control of the state legislature. They couldn't care less if gays and lesbians can marry their partners or not. It was all a farce, a canard, a fairy tale intended to gin up their base and create havoc using gay people as pawns in their sick little games.

Here's how I know this.

From MNUnitedforAllFamilies:

"About the Big Gay Race -by Jacob Frey

Last year, I organized The Big Gay Race 5k to mobilize the community, and to fight the anti-marriage amendment. The event was a huge success, as over 2,000 happy, smiling warriors took to the streets of Minneapolis in support of love, commitment, and the freedom to marry for ALL Minnesotans and their families." All for a fee of course. This organization ended up collecting over $4.6 million dollars to fund their opposition to the following:

"Minnesotans United for All Families is a broad coalition of organizations and community and business leaders having conversations with Minnesotans about why this amendment – which seeks to limit the freedom to marry for committed couples in Minnesota – must be defeated. Faith, labor, progressive, and nonpartisan organizations, communities of color, current and former elected officials, Republicans, Democrats, Greens, Independents, and Libertarians have all joined with our campaign to defeat this constitutional amendment and encourage Minnesotans to vote NO in November."

Now, this is interesting information. So, this organization fought against an amendment that "seeks to limit the freedom to marry for committed couples in Minnesota." Really. But, Minnesota doesn't have same-sex marriage so how would the amendment limit something we don't have? Bizarre.

It's even odder when you take a gander at the rogue's gallery of leftists, progressives and socialists on that very same page, including the Minnesota DFL. They jumped in with both feet. But, I'm confused. If same-sex marriage isn't legal, who passed that law in the first place? To understand, let's go back to 1993 when a Hawaii court ruled the state must issue same-sex couples marriage licenses. It wasn't a legislative act but an activist court and it set this firestorm off.

From MPR:

"To head that off, in 1996, a Republican-controlled U.S. Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act, or DOMA, the first federal law defining marriage as between a man and a woman. Democratic President Bill Clinton signed it into law. It would prevent gay couples from receiving federal benefits. It also meant states wouldn't have to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states."

Oh, so the Republicans passed it and Democrat Clinton signed it. Certainly Minnesota's DFLers voted against DOMA, right?

"Nine members of Minnesota's delegation voted for it. Martin Sabo of Minneapolis, the Democratic congressman representing Minnesota's 5th district, was the lone member of the Minnesota delegation to vote against it.

Two years later, in this MPR Midday call-in show in 1998, the late Democratic Sen. Paul Wellstone, who had voted for DOMA, was still hearing from people unhappy with his vote."

Holy handball! So progressive/socialist Wellstone voted AGAINST same-sex marriage to be recognized federally or across state lines? This is amazing. What was he thinking? Well, we can be sure the DFLers in the state legislature weren't so hateful toward gay couples. Or were they?

"In 1997, the Minnesota Legislature passed its own version of what has been referred to as the Defense of Marriage Act (Laws of Minnesota 1997, Chapter 203, Article 10). The governor approved it on June 2, 1997. This act clarified that "lawful marriage may be contracted only between persons of the opposite sex" and went on to specifically prohibit "marriage between persons of the same sex" (Minnesota Statutes chapter 517.01 and 517.03)." According to the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, the DFL controlled both houses in 1997. So, Democrats voted for Federal DOMA and state DOMA. But, I thought they loved and respected gay people so much. They don't. They are frauds.

I take you down memory lane for this reason. I knew if the marriage amendment went down, the DFL would turn and scurry from it. Not just because they're gutless wonders. But, because if gays get marriage, their franchise over the community expires.

Gays could escape the Democratic Party plantation.

I live in south Minneapolis, and until recently, I walked among progressives

Continued on page 56

and Democrats and listened to their words and thoughts about gay marriage like a secret agent. They are all for it, in theory. But they wouldn't do anything to press the issue if it might harm their ability to rob the productive sector and give money to their cronies. These people talk a big game, but it is only their avarice for power and prestige that drives them. This is why I wasn't at all surprised by this:

"For Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk, DFL-Cook, who has said he'll seek to become majority leader, a fight over marriage is not a top priority.

"I think anybody that has policy ideas need to find a way to put them on the back shelf right now. This state has serious financial challenges," Bakk said at the news conference.

House Minority Leader Paul Thissen, DFL-Minneapolis, who is in line to become House speaker, said it's too soon to set off in a new direction for marriage.

Asked whether he would sign a bill legalizing gay marriage, [DFL Governor] Dayton demurred. "We just had an election yesterday," he said. "I think it's time for everybody to catch their breath."

So, following a big rejection and a huge campaign to persuade Minnesotans that same sex couples should have "the freedom to marry for ALL Minnesotans," the DFL is gonna punt? What about the DFL leaders who are gay? Aren't they outraged over this betrayal?

"But Dibble, who is gay and served on the committee that put same-sex marriage into the national Democratic Party platform, also is urging caution.

"I think we need to just pause for a second and really understand what this victory yesterday means," he said. "I don't know if we're going to immediately proceed to an effort to repeal Minnesota's DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act) law, but I do know that we are going to continue to take a look at having this discussion."

Huh? Would any other group who had successfully launched a campaign and won be shoved aside like this? Of course not. It's absolutely laughable to ignore a sizable defeat of the amendment and wait for the momentum to die down. What are they waiting for?

Even Democratic lawmakers who strongly back gay marriage rights said there are risks if the party is seen as pushing it too quickly at the Capitol.

Rep. Phyllis Kahn of Minneapolis, who has co-sponsored Marty's bills to legalize gay marriage, said it runs the risk of alienating moderate and swing voters who think politicians are too fixated on social issues.

"One of the arguments we continually used against the Republicans is they were focusing on social issues and not economic ones," Kahn said. Still, she said, "It's something we have to do eventually."

They are waiting to be forced. These DFLer's aren't going to just let gays and lesbians wander away from The Party. They find the gay community to be a ready supply of volunteers and campaign cash not to mention votes and a nice straw man argument against Republicans. They can't lose that, and so gay people are once again patted on the head and told to quietly sit in the corner. It is doubtful the GLBT Democrats in this state will have the cojones to take on the DFL leadership.

Meanwhile, the Big Gay Farce will continue. □





LAW | Phil Duran

In Your Court

ADMIT IT: when you voted November 6, excited to select myriad elected officials and to weigh in on two constitutional amendments, your eyes probably glazed over a bit when it came to the list of judicial races on the back page. Who ARE these people? What do they DO? Do I care? As a lawyer, I expected to be inundated with questions about my thoughts about many of these candidates, and I was not disappointed. I don't blame people for checking out when it comes to these races, but it's a dangerous blind spot for our community that may come back to haunt us down the road.

Do courts matter to people who care about LGBT people and equality? You bet. In Minnesota, countless couples have been granted either second-parent adoptions (where the partner of a person with kids adopts those kids, becoming their second legal parent) or joint adoptions (where a same-sex couple works with a placement agency to adopt a child). Each of those adoptions – the numbers are not definitively known, but believed to be in the thousands – was granted by a district court judge.

Trans? Guess where all those legal name-changes wind up, and where many people go to seek amendments to their birth records? You got it: district court.

Affected by domestic abuse, or being harassed by a neighbor, and need an Order for Protection or Harassment Restraining Order? Head to district court.

Victim of a crime? You know where the alleged perpetrators are prosecuted: district court. For example, in the past two years, the man who killed his girlfriend, Krissy Bates, and the woman who is accused of assaulting CeCe McDonald, both trans women, have faced prosecution in Hennepin County district courts.

Additionally, judges in Hennepin County have recently issued rulings allowing a surviving same-sex spouse (the couple was married in California) to inherit property after his partner passed away without completing a will, and declaring, upon the parties' request, that a same-sex couple's out-of-state marriage was no longer in effect.

These are the district courts. Higher up, we have the Court of Appeals and Supreme Court. In 2010, three couples filed a lawsuit ultimately seeking an appellate ruling that the Minnesota constitution guaranteed their right to marry.

Simply put, it matters who is making these decisions, and it matters that the courts exist and have the resources needed to function. In Minnesota, there are those who seek to politicize the courts, by encouraging partisan endorsements and urging judicial candidates to take stands on the very issues they are expected to judge impartially. To know a judge shares your party label may make you feel good (or may even make it easier to cast votes on election day), but how would you feel if the judge was from another party? Would you feel you had a real shot at a fair hearing? Most Republicans and Democrats actually agree: judges should be selected on the basis of merit, not party labels.

And that part about resources for the judicial branch? That's where things have been getting difficult in recent years, due to persistent budget shortfalls and a sense among some in the political branches that Minnesota's NON-political branch is not that critical. Currently, there are vacancies on the bench across the state, and courthouses are cutting their hours of operation to save money. Unfortunately, the need for court services has not diminished. Additionally, demand for civil legal services – free or sharply reduced-rate representation in certain areas for very low-income people – has skyrocketed at exactly the same time the legislature has cut funding. The public-defender system is also creaking.

So what do we in the LGBT community do? Two things: first, the legislature reconvenes in January, and will be grappling with yet another budget deficit. Some legislators will think they can save money by underfunding the justice system, without realizing the impact on individuals and on the system as a whole. We have friends in high places, and we should not hesitate to let them know: we care about the courts, because we need them!

Second, in 2014 we will once again be faced with a ballot that includes a list of judicial candidates. Each of us can take the time to research them, and their reputations in the community, and cast informed votes. These are people who could have the power to hold accountable those who would harm us, help build our families and confirm our identities, and establish our constitutional rights. Isn't that worth doing a little homework? □

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I'll Take the Soup

IRA TURNED 80 this year. As a birthday gift, his friends at the retirement home hired him a prostitute. The prostitute went to his room, knocked on the door and when he answered said, "Ira, I'm here to give you super sex."Ira thought a moment, shrugged, and said, "I'll take the soup."

Like most jokes, this is funnier when told aloud, and after you've had a few cocktails. But, giggling or not, you get the point. At some point in all of our lives, soup becomes more important than sex.

I was reminded of this joke after spending time with a few long-term couples—some gay; some straight. Some with kids; some without. The one thing they had in common was their casual disinterest in marital sex. And their compulsion to discuss their sexual malaise loudly and surprisingly merrily over breakfast in a diner.

There's something about breakfast that prompts talk of sexual death. Maybe it's because greasy diner breakfasts are so comforting and satisfying. It's the food these couples ate in their early days after spending the night mauling each other in bed. Instead of making them feel melancholy for their old randy ways, some sophisticated middle-aged coping mechanism makes them believe that sex was always only a means to an end.

I live in a lake cottage in a charming resort town. Part of your responsibility in living in a vacation destination is playing host to your friends hoping to escape their suburban nightmare existence for a couple days. So, I built a small guest cottage in my backyard because I did not want to hear the guttural lovemaking noises sure to result from a couple seeing each other for the first time in months without the headache of screaming babies or work-induced strain.

However, my guests almost never want to sleep in the guest cottage. Instead, they want to stay in the main house with me, fretting obsessively about where our next meal will come from.

Last weekend, a happily married couple came for a visit. At dinner, they were already discussing breakfast. I suggested we sleep in the following morning and that I cook brunch. They looked at me as if I'd suggested I skin one of them and roast them on a spit.

"We want to go to one of those cute diners for breakfast. And you know how these places fill up," said the husband. "We need to get there first thing in the morning."

"Yeah, but you're on vacation. Don't you want to have sex in the morning?" I said. (I'm happy to report that I still like sex! But now, in middle age, I like to have it in the morning almost exclusively. That way I can focus on important stuff the rest of the day, like finding and sharing cute animal videos on Facebook.)

"Oh, don't be silly," the wife said. "If we tried to have sex in the morning, we'd just be fantasizing about breakfast the whole time."

Her husband heartily agreed. "Why not cut out the middleman and skip straight to breakfast."

"Don't you remember when sex was the most important thing in your relationship? Don't you miss it?" I asked.

They looked a bit misty for a moment, remembering their early days of pawing each other sloppily in the back seat of cars. This couple regularly went to one of those sleezy fantasy hotels before they married! And they took pictures of themselves romping in the room as if they were in Disneyland! And then they showed me the pictures! (I've never forgiven them for that.)

"We still like sex," the husband said, "but we've already done everything there is to do sexually. Or at least all she'll let me do. But we've yet to find the perfect place for eggs Benedict."

"And what an exciting day that will be when we do!" the wife said. They crinkled their eyes at each other in marital bliss. □

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MS. BEHAVIOR© | Meryl Cohn

Humdrum Sex Life and Uncertain of Signals

Dear Ms Behavior:

I've been dating a guy who is also my roommate/landlord for almost two years and from the beginning, prior to my moving into his home, he was very aware of my desire to be in a monogamous relationship with him. After moving in and living there for seven months, I found out that when he said he was going out to spend time with friends, he was actually out hooking up with any stranger he could find. When my birthday approached he also went and met up with a guy after having sex with me. After finding out about all of this, I confronted him and we had a long talk; so far as I know, we have been monogamous ever since.

However my problem is this: when he was out "hooking up" he was doing all sorts of fun things with other guys, but now, since becoming monogamous, our sex life is lackluster at best. Most times I do anything and everything to sexually please him, such as massages, oral, bottoming, rimming etc, but when it's "my turn" to get off, it is always a dry handjob with yawning that I get from him. If I want anything more I need to ask for it. I've talked to him about this several times; each time it's been okay for a short while after the discussion, and then back to the same old boring thing.

I obviously still have some trust issues with him but I love him and he tells me he loves me very much as well. However, my thinking is that relationships also need intimacy and we lack this fully. Should I just give up after two years and move along? Am I wasting my time? I just hate giving up on something I've worked at for two years.

-DECIDING

Dear Deciding:

Your dilemma is rife with complications and questions. First there's the fact that the beginning of your relationship coincided with moving together, not to mention that your boyfriend is also your roommate/landlord, which potentially creates confusion around things like convenience vs. power vs. love. Second, there's the question of how well a relationship can work when it's between two people who have different values regarding monogamy vs. sexual freedom. You yourself noted that sex became rather humdrum once your boyfriend stopped being with other people. Maybe he (and even, unconsciously you?) need the excitement of sex with others in order to keep your own relationship lively. This issue needs further exploration.

Some people aren't good for much after they come. If he gives you a "dry handjob" after you please him, why not try letting him please you first? Then maybe he'll be able to offer something other than lazy sex.

Since there are many issues to unravel, couples counseling might help. If he won't go with you, you'd probably benefit from solo therapy to sort this out for yourself. Don't let the two years be the deciding factor: The real question is not whether you should stay together because of what you've already invested, but rather whether you'd still choose him knowing what you already know.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

How do you tell if a woman is into you? I have been living a heterosexual life for a long time. As an inexperienced woman, I feel I have a lot to offer a woman but I have no idea how to tell if she would have interest in me. I've been going to clubs but I don't know if there is true interest because my history is of men approaching me, not women.

-A FRIEND

Dear Friend:

When men like you, it's easier to tell (even when they don't have an erection flailing about like a mailing tube when they dance with you or eat a sandwich). They're culturally and evolutionarily trained to let you know that they're interested.

Women really aren't all that bewildering, but some are more subtle than others. Detecting whether or not a woman is into you will depend on how much she's willing to put herself out there. Some babes are direct and will just tell you they like you or ask you on a date. Others will circle around like sharks, checking you out, assessing your interest, waiting to see if you notice them. Over time, it will become easier to read their body language and their more subtle expression of interest. Maybe you can find an experienced lesbian friend or two who can accompany you on your "journey" (but please don't use that word). And, if you go with a group of friends to the places where women are known to hang out, graze, or dance, you might actually have fun. □

TROLÍN, UN DIABLITO ROSA — POR RODRO



What if there had only been gay animals on Noah's Ark?
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ADVERTISER INDEX

Adult
Megaphone 65

Apparel & Accessories
STYLEDLIFE 9

Arts & Entertainment
Chanhassen Dinner Theater ..23
Hennepin Theatre Trust ..25, 27
Illusion Theater 29
Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus 23

Automotive
Fiat Minneapolis 18
LaMettry's Collision 6

Bars & Nightlife
19 Bar 19
Gay 90's 21
Lush Food Bar 19
Town House 20

Beauty & Relaxation
Anew Aesthetic Medical Center 17

Beverages
Diageo 68
Surdyk's 33

Communications
AM950 49

Education
Mounds Park Academy 9

Financial
Adam Elg 10
Moltaji, Roya 17
Palm, Karen 7
Wells Fargo Bank 51

Floral & Garden
Tangletown Gardens 49

Funeral Services
Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels & Cremation 49

Gifts
Fantasy Gifts 21

Grocery Stores
El Burrito Mercado 33
Wedge Co-op 32

Health & Wellness
Blue Cross Blue Shield 5
Eagle Trace Wellness Center 23
North Suburban Eye Specialists 11
Medica 7
Right at Home 41
Steele Fitness 3
University of Minnesota, Infectious Diseases 15
Uptown Dermatology & Skin Spa 12
YWCA of Minneapolis 53

Health, Wellness & Recovery
Dr. Paul Amble DDS 12
Latitudes 53

Home Furnishings & Accessories
Designer Marketplace 13, 56

Home Services
ShelfGenie 45
Re-Bath 23
Sedgwick Heating and Air ...49
Standard Heating & Air Conditioning 5
Total Comfort 41
Uptown Plumbing, Heating & Cooling 2

Insurance
Bartell, Dawn 6
Wolfson, Steve 56

Jewelry
Max's 53
Scheherazade Jewelers 13
T Lee Fine Designer Jewelry ..35

Legal
Cloutier Law Offices 13
Dean, Jeff 5
Heltzer & Houghtaling 8
Jerry Burg, Attorney at Law ..10
Johnson, Randall 45
Moshier, Becky 7

Lottery
Minnesota State Lottery 9

Media & Communications
Radio K 770 53

Mortgage
Gleason, Pat 8

Organizations
The Aliveness Project 6
Metropolitan Center for Independent Living 7

Pet Products & Services
Animal Humane Society 17

Network Ads ..... 59 - 61

Real Estate & Rentals
Eichaker, Dean 12
Vue 58

Restaurants
Bar Louie Uptown 21
Blackbird Cafe 33
Burger Moe's 35
Cecil's Deli 29
Downtowner Woodfire Grill..21
Fuji-Ya 34
Holy Land Imported Gourmet Grocery, Bakery, Deli 34
Jakeeno's Pizza & Pasta 32
Loring Kitchen & Bar 29
Marla's Caribbean Cuisine ..33
Parasole Restaurants 35
Rudolph's Ribs 34
Toast Wine Bar & Cafe 32
Tum Rup Thai 33
Grandview Grill 29
Louisiana Cafe 29
Uptown Diner 29
Woodbury Cafe 29

Tobacco Products
Smokedale Tobacco 67



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Two Sets of Books

"IN MY DREAMS, I see a fat man. On his face is a frown. He's got money in his left hand. In his right, he's got strings that run all over town... In my dreams, I see the young men that will change history. They will die for the fat man as he laughs so carelessly..." sings John Fullbright.

And then there's a stuffy networking event at a bar where cologne and perfume clogs pores and windpipes—a cloud of insufferable, urban-weather-effect-inducing flower musk ready to set everything aflame. People stand in their ties and their blazers, pretending they want to hear the latest about their acquaintances' trips to Exciting "Oh, Where'd You Go Again?"

And there you are, looking from the outside-in, quietly judging these people about how artificial they seem. You see no irony in the fact that you're standing here, too. In a suit. With a drink in hand. Waiting to see someone—anyone—you know, so you don't look like a loner. You'd introduce yourself to a stranger, you think, but only if there were someone else with you.

And so you wait, making eye contact with people who seem interesting, charming, or nice—quietly reaching out for attention, but not relenting in your soft, internal commentary about how you hate networking. While we love most things at a distance (when it's the details that push us away), things like *networking* are different—things like this, that require forced (but somehow voluntary) conversation, things like this are better up-close. The idea is terrible, but the execution is self-indulgent: All in the name of having a name. Or pushing through an idea for which you are passionate. Or finding friends. Or jobs. *Why can't it be easier?*

And you wonder if there are others here like you, with two sets of books: one that tells a story of how one "really" feels about being here—those resentful diaries—and one that tells the story of how it's important enough, for whatever reason, to be here. To "suck it up" and make it worth it.

And you see no one who sticks out like you feel like you do, no one here standing by himself or herself. They're all chatting, laughing, toasting; all championing themselves, their friends, their loves, their charities, their passions, their jobs, their everythings—it's an orgy that feeds on itself. But time here is precious, and the longer one stays alone, the more his alcohol has an effect opposite than were he to have a group to which he was part: He feels more and more removed, and early departure becomes increasingly attractive.

And just as you're about to leave, you see someone you've met but whose name you can't remember, so you approach her and tell her how fabulous she looks. You ask how she's been and offer to buy her a drink. She introduces you to the friendly folks she's talking with, and you learn her name through your new acquaintances: "So how do you know Carol?" And you laugh nervously because you don't know the answer, but respond: "Oh, you know, through Match.com." And everyone laughs because you're obviously gay. And you've evaded the question.

And the night progresses and you meet Carol's other friends, and then their friends and acquaintances, and before long you're having the time of your life, losing yourself to conversation and alcohol, handing out and receiving business cards to and from delightful and pleasant people: good people with sincere intentions and sparkling senses of humor.

And you'll tell yourself that you really *should* come to more of these events. You've met so many friends this way. Sure, you've met a lot of people who remain acquaintances, but here, too, have started some genuine relationships.

And you'll feel this way, high on life and social fulfillment, until the first twenty minutes of your next event, when you'll have both sets of books in hand, judging the fat man for his social gluttony, without knowing that his will be the card you walk away. □

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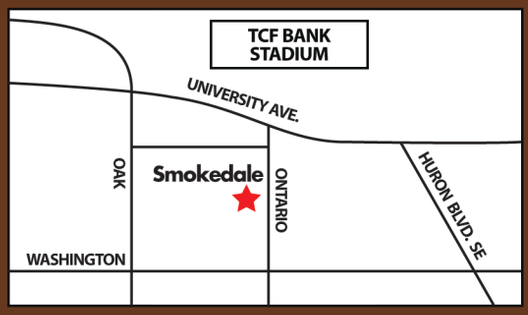
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